

ONE MAN'S OPINIONS

BY N. D. COCHRAN

Advertising Control.—The Fourth Estate is a publication for newspaper men, and deals with subjects interesting to them, not the least of which is advertising.

In its issue of July 4 The Fourth Estate published numerous statements under the heading: "Heard About the Ad Club's Convention," and among the remarks credited to ad men I find this one:

"If we only keep this going strong we shall soon be able to dictate to newspaper publishers, not only what they may put in their ad columns, but also in their news and editorial columns."

That sentiment isn't often expressed so boldly, but it runs through the minds of many advertisers and some advertising agents. It is a sentiment newspaper readers will have to consider seriously if they want to preserve a free press; and if they don't have a free press they won't have much of anything worth while.

The people know pretty well how Big Business controls politics and the courts, but if it is permitted to control newspapers absolutely, both as to editorial policy and the publication of news, the people will be slaves indeed.

There is no sound reason why an advertiser should have any more influence on a newspaper's policy than a reader who isn't an advertiser; there are many sound reasons why an advertiser should NOT have more influence than any other citizen.

If an advertiser makes money advertising in a newspaper he gets his money's worth and is entitled to nothing but the space he pays for. If he doesn't make money advertising then he is a fool business man for spending his money for profitless advertising.

I am speaking now of men who advertise legitimately, for the pur-

pose of inviting public attention to what they have to sell. There is advertising that isn't legitimate, or at least isn't done for the mere purpose of increasing business.

I refer now to money paid for advertising by public corporations for the real purpose of influencing the paper's news and editorial policy.

I would class much of the advertising of the Chicago Telephone, the Commonwealth Edison and People's Gas companies in the last-named class.

This public service advertising isn't placed like legitimate advertising—in only enough of the papers to cover the field. On the contrary, it is placed in ALL newspapers that will take the money. I notice that right now, during the dull business and advertising season, the public service corporations are keeping up their advertising.

Every month a check from these companies finds its way to all of the newspaper offices; and doubtless it has the effect it is intended to have—the newspapers that get the money can't see much news of public interest in anything that might offend its advertisers.

It may be that the persistent advertising campaign of the Chicago and Bell Telephone companies has something to do with the strange silence of the Chicago newspapers on the campaign of telephone users against the absorption of the Automatic phone plant by the Chicago Co. and the establishment of an airtight phone monopoly in Chicago.

Automobile advertisers have forced the newspapers to have automobile news regularly; and the purpose is, of course, to keep up public interest in autos, so advertisers can sell more of them.

Newspapers that don't run auto news are boycotted by auto advertisers.

If this policy is followed up other lines of business will force newspapers to run news about their in-